

# Cross-border purchasing of cigarettes among smokers in six countries of the EUREST-PLUS ITC Europe Surveys

Driezen, P., Thompson, M.E., Fong, G.T., Demjén, T., Tountas, Y., Trofor, A., Przewoźniak, K., Zatoński, W., Fernández, E., Mons, U., & Vardavas, C.

## Abstract

**Introduction:** The availability of lower-cost cigarettes in neighboring countries provides price-sensitive smokers with incentives to purchase cheaper out-of-country cigarettes. This study estimates the prevalence of and factors associated with cross-border purchasing of cheaper cigarettes among smokers from Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Spain. The prevalence of cross-border purchasing was estimated by residential location, defined as living in regions bordering a lower-price country (where prices were at least €1/pack lower), regions bordering a similar- or higher-price country, and internal non-border regions.

**Methods:** Data were from a survey of nationally representative samples of adult smokers (n=6011) from Germany, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Spain. The primary outcome was purchasing cheaper out-of-country cigarettes in the previous six months. Residential location was defined using The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS2 in Germany and NUTS3 in the other countries). Multivariable logistic regression tested differences in purchasing cheaper out-of-country cigarettes by country and residential location.

**Results:** Residential location was associated with purchasing cheaper out-of-country cigarettes in Germany and Poland ( $p < 0.05$ ): 31% of German and 11% of Polish smokers living in regions bordering lower-price countries reported purchasing cheaper out-of-country cigarettes in the previous six months. Smokers living in regions bordering lower-price countries had 4.21 times greater odds of purchasing cheaper out-of-country cigarettes compared to smokers living in non-border regions.

**Conclusions:** Overall, only a minority of smokers in the six countries purchased cheaper cigarettes outside their country. However, smokers living in regions bordering countries where cigarettes were at least €1/pack lower than their home country had significantly higher odds of purchasing cheaper out-of-country cigarettes. This effect was especially prominent among German smokers. Tax harmonization policies designed to minimize crossborder price differentials can eliminate lower-priced alternatives for price-sensitive smokers.

## Recommended Citation

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